# MANAGEMENT OF THE COMPLEX PROBLEMS CAUSED BY URBANIZING WILD ANIMALS BY AUTHORITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

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#### Abstract

Nowadays, it is more often a problem that wild animals appear on the territory of municipalities and usually cause alarm among the residents. However, these animals usually do not only enter the territory of one settlement, but also "visit" the settlements in each other's catchment area, in accordance with the structure of the Hungarian small village settlement. We consider it necessary to have a professional signaling system connecting several settlements, even at the district level, which can be used to send an immediate signal to the affected settlements in case of wildlife detection in the territory of local government, so that they can take the necessary preliminary - professional protection - measures. In this way, municipalities can prepare professionally for the appearance of wild animals. With this signaling system, unexpected appearances and unprofessional "reception" of the wild animals could be avoided.

The Act of CL, 2016 on the general administrative procedure (Åkr.) as a framework legislation leaves many procedural issues open, which are filled with content by individual sectoral legislation. A question may arise as to whether the Åkr. so to what extent can it be considered a flexible law, to what extent and where does it allow deviations from its rules? Can we find the Åkr. among its provisions, those where it would be worthwhile to introduce norms allowing for further deviations, especially in those life situations where the delay in implementation could even endanger the public interest? And this thought also leads to the center of our research, the question of immediate enforceability. Because in this respect, it cannot be said that Åkr. flexible legislation, partly due to the exhaustive list, and partly due to the exclusion of consideration. We focus our research on this problem and on the conflicts caused by wild animals, which are increasingly prominent nowadays.

Keywords: wild animals, local government, settlement internal area, sectoral regulation

# 1. Introductory thoughts

Sightings of wild animals in urban areas have been the subject of numerous articles in recent years. See for examples in (Fonyód, 2023; Újbuda, 2023; Nyugat, 2023, Agrárágazat, 2023 & Bama, 2023). The articles focus on the same unfortunate social problem, while trying to provide support and

reassurance to the people in the communities. In this study, we want to address this issue, but we do not offer either guidance or reassurance, but a clear legal environment, or rather the lack thereof. Based on the provisions of two basic domestic laws (Act No. CLXXXIX of 2011 on Local Governments in Hungary, (hereinafter, Mötv.) and Act No. CL of 2016 on the General Administrative Procedure (hereinafter, Ákr.)), we would like to present the possibilities of resolving the problems caused by wild animals in the inland areas, and we would also like to propose possible solutions to fill the - in our opinion - incomplete regulation. Certainly, we will not only examine the rules of these two laws, but also analyse other legislation related to the problem raised. Last but not least, we would like to propose a de lege ferenda suggestion with regard to the legislation.

#### 2. Description of the current legal context

It is perhaps not too much of a "blunder" to open this chapter with the premise that the natural habitat of wild animals is not located within the administrative boundaries of a municipality. This elementary statement is reinforced by Act No. LV of 1996 on the protection, management and hunting of wild game (hereinafter, Vtv.), which states that "hunting area" means ... land and water ... where the game finds the necessary food, has natural reproduction conditions and natural needs for movement, shelter and rest. [Art. 8 para 1 of the Vtv.] This might not even exclude the internal territory of the municipalities, but the Act clarifies this provision and states that the administrative internal territory of the municipality is not considered as hunting ground. [Art. 8 para 2 point a) of the Vtv.] So the natural habitat of wild animals is contiguous land or water, excluding, among other things, areas within the administrative boundaries of municipalities, where they can breed, acquire food and hide.

Although it was trivial to point out this fact, it is nevertheless necessary in order to study the subject, since the appearance of wild animals within the administrative territory of municipalities is not yet an everyday phenomenon. However, as mentioned earlier, unfortunately, the number of inland appearances - particularly in recent years - has been on the rise. We do not want to go into the causes of this within the framework of this study, we only wish to deal with the cause itself, the problem of the mother sow walking peacefully on the side street. So, if a resident of a municipality finds him/herself in such a situation, what (legal) options are available to him/her, who (authority) can he/she turn to.

Thus a practical problem is given, which can immediately be approached in two ways. The situation is different if, for example, a wild boar is seen digging up vegetables in the garden of a resident, damaging the fence, or if there is a trail along the cycle path from which it is alerting cyclists, or even if it turns to attack.

The first case is relatively simpler, with a clearer legal framework. According to the above-mentioned article of the Vtv., inhabited areas are not part of the hunting area, thus hunting is not allowed in these areas. Therefore, the killing of a wild animal in an inland area is not considered hunting. Yet hunters are best positioned to help with the symptomatic management of the problem, although it has to be added that they are not obliged to do so. No legislation provides for hunters to be involved in the removal of wild animals that disturb, endanger or harm the public. However, it should be emphasised that hunters are the ones who can most effectively take action. The hunter knows the behaviour of the game, has a hunting rifle, and of course shooting practice. In this situation, the resident of the municipality can therefore file a request with the competent police station (or, for example, following a number of notifications from residents, the notary of the municipality) to have the game that is causing damage to the inhabited area taken down, in order to protect public and private property from serious damage. [Art. 36 para 1 of the Government Decree No. 253 of 2004] The application for a permit must include the

identification details of the person who will conduct the shooting and of the participants, the details of the permit to carry a firearm, the exact place and time of the shooting, safety measures and means of informing the public. [Art. 36 para 2 of the Government Decree No. 253 of 2004] For these mandatory data, it is advisable for the notary of a municipality to contact the police, as the average resident of a municipality may not be aware of the information requested. The decision, i.e. the granting of the permit, must be notified to the competent local government and the competent territorial hunting organisation. Given that the appearance of the game is not regular, the police often issue a permit for a specific period (for example three months) in their decision (Nagykovácsi, 2023).

In the regulation, we are therefore faced with the hunting of game that causes damage, subject to a permit. (Tari et al., 2020, p. 303) With this half-sentence we can distinguish this case from the second example above, where there is only a threat of attack or the animal is only scaring the inhabitants of the settlement. At this stage of our research, we have not found any specific legal provision for this situation. Nevertheless, we try to look for some legal references.

Taking the provisions of the Mötv. as a starting point. In our opinion, the presence of wild animals in the administrative territory of a municipality affects all or a significant part of the population of the municipality, and therefore can be considered a local public issue. A menu-like list of local public affairs is set out in Article 13 paragraph 1 of the Mötv. Let's see what local public affairs are in the Mötv: 1. urban development, urban planning; 2. municipal management (construction and maintenance of public cemeteries, provision of street lighting, provision of chimney sweeping services, construction and maintenance of local roads and their appurtenances, construction and maintenance of public parks and other public spaces, provision of parking for vehicles); 3. the naming of public spaces and public facilities owned by the municipality; 4. the provision of primary health care and services to promote healthy lifestyles; 5. environmental health (public cleanliness, ensuring the cleanliness of the urban environment, insect and rodent control); 6. nursery care; 7. cultural services, in particular the provision of public library services; support for cinema, performing arts organisations, local protection of cultural heritage; support for local cultural activities; 8. child welfare services and benefits; 8a social services and benefits under which municipal assistance may be granted; 9. housing and premises management; 10. the provision of care and rehabilitation for persons made homeless in the territory and the prevention of homelessness; 11. local protection of the environment and nature, water management, water damage prevention; 12. national defence, civil protection, disaster management, local public employment; 13. local taxation, economic organisation and tourism; 14. providing opportunities for small producers and farmers to sell their products, including weekend sales, as defined by law; 15. sport, youth affairs; 16. nationality affairs; 17. contributing to the public safety of the municipality; 18. local public transport; 20. district heating; 21. water utilities, where the local authority is responsible for the supply of water utilities in accordance with the provisions of the Water Utilities Act. Three of these can be considered to be relevant. Article 13 paragraph (1) point 11 (local protection of the environment and nature), on the other hand, point 12 (disaster management) and finally point 17 (contribution to public safety in the municipality).

Regarding the local protection of the environment and nature, the explanation should perhaps not be too long, because even if there is no damage from wild animals, it is not natural that they enter settlements or even leave their original habitat and disrupt the flora and fauna of a micro-environment, such as a forest.

Disaster management needs more explanation. Among the interpretative provisions of Act No. CXXVIII of 2011 on Disaster Management and the Amendment of Certain Related Acts (hereinafter, Katvéd. tv.), several basic principles are set out. From the legislation, we must highlight the definitions

of disaster, disaster risk and disaster management. The Article 3 point 5 of the Katvéd. tv. says about the disaster "...a condition or situation which endangers or damages the life, health, material assets, basic services of the population, the natural environment or natural assets in such a way or to such an extent that the prevention, remediation or elimination of the consequences or exceeds the possibilities of the designated organisations to respond in the prescribed order of cooperation and requires the introduction of special measures and the continuous and strictly coordinated cooperation of the municipalities and public authorities. An inland wildlife occurrence can be attributed to several conceptual elements in the legislation. The concept of disaster describes a situation that threatens the life and health of people, which meets the wildlife occurrence recorded in our example. However, in the second part of the definition, there is a gap in relation to our specific situation, as we cannot specify - with exact powers which body is designated by law to deal with the threat. The Article 3 point 9 of the Katvéd. tv. says about the disaster risk "a process or condition that could reasonably be expected to result in the probability of a disaster occurring, thereby endangering human health, the environment, safety of life and property." A disaster risk is defined as a condition (inland wildlife sighting) which, if it occurs (the wild animal not only follows the inhabitant of the settlement from a distance, but also attacks him), endangers human life and health. The Article 3 point 8 of the Katvéd. tv. says about the disaster management, in the protection against various disasters, the ... information, warning, ... activities aimed at preventing the occurrence of a disaster, eliminating immediate hazards, eliminating the causes, reducing their harmful effects, protecting the life and property of the population." The task of disaster management is, among other things, to provide information and alarms to prevent the occurrence of a disaster and to avert the danger. The mayor of the municipality performs its disaster management tasks with the assistance of the professional disaster management body, which is considered a state administrative task and competence. [Art. 19 para 2-2a of the Katvéd. tv.] So we can see that, in a theoretical sense, our research problem of applying the provisions of the law is still valid, but it remains only at the level of theory, as there is not even a similar "catastrophe" in the provisions of the Katvéd. Furthermore, cases for which the law empowers the mayor to act are even more limited.

The third issue to be examined is the contribution of local government to public safety in the municipality. The Mötv. provides more details on this task. [Art. 17 of the Mötv.] Pursuant to the Mötv., the municipal government may establish a separate organisation to perform this task. [Art. 17 para 1 of the Mötv.] Typically, these are municipal police forces, which exercise their functions and powers under the professional supervision of the competent police authority, on the basis of a written cooperation agreement with the competent county police headquarters. [Art. 17 para 2 of the Mötv.] A municipal police forces may be established as an internal department of the municipality, as a separate budgetary body or as an internal department of a budgetary body. [Art. 3 para 1 of the Act No. CXX of 2012] As a member of the municipal law enforcement service, may be employed, amongst others, the municipal nature guard, the field guard and the forestry staff performing law enforcement duties. This is notable because "ordinary" municipal police officers are not licensed to carry firearms, whereas municipial nature guards and forestry staff performing law enforcement duties may carry a handgun and field guards may carry a shotgun. [Art. 21 para 2 point aa), ab) and b) of the Act No. CXX of 2012] However, this is not a solution to our problem either, since persons acting in this capacity may only carry a weapon openly in the non-residential part of the municipality's administrative territory. However, in the case of the field guard, the law states that he/she may carry a shotgun "for reasons related to public health, air safety and the alarming and killing of animals ... in order to ensure the reasonable production of agricultural products". [Art. 21 para 2 point aa) of the Act No. CXX of 2012] In our current practical situation, the alarm of the animal could be appropriate.

It may be interesting to highlight another aspect of the law on persons performing law enforcement functions. Under Article 21 of the Act, a professional hunter may carry a handgun and a hunting rifle while performing his/her duties. Of course, the use of these is also limited, as a handgun can only be used to shoot at the mercy of big game when searching for it, and a shotgun can only be used to kill wounded or injured big game. [Art. 21 para 2 points ab) ac) of the Act No. CXX of 2012] Thus, the use of the professional hunter in our present example also has plenty of obstacles.

Try to complicate a bit more, our problem, which is currently still legally messy and partly regulated. What if the appearance in the interior, the challenge to the residents, is not "committed" by a big game animal that is native to our country and can be hunted [Art. 1 para 1 point a) of the Ministerial (FVM) Decree No.79 of 2004, hereinafter, Vtv. vhr.l, highly protected, such as a bear or a wolf. Unfortunately, there have been examples of this in the last year or two (Infostart, 2023; Palóchírnök, 2023; HVG, 2023), so it is no longer such an utopian problem. However, in the case of a big game animal that cannot be hunted, killing is not an option, only capturing it alive. According to the Vtv., capture may be carried out "by means of nets, trapping pens, stun guns and ... permitted methods of trapping." (Makai, 2021, p. 63) In the next paragraph 4 of the Vtv. it is added that the use of stun guns and stun weapons is only permitted with a prior authorisation. This permit can only be granted in a full procedure, and an administrative service fee of HUF 10,000 is payable at the same time as the application (Kormányhivatal, 2023). The hunting authority in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County is the Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Government Office, Agricultural Department, Division of Agriculture. The Vtv. vhr. on the taking of game sets out an interesting idea. "With the specific authorisation of the hunting authority, for the purposes of monitoring, scientific research, sampling or experimentation, removal from a populated area, or for reasons of human or animal health or air safety, stunning and paralysing chemicals and ammunition may be used for the capture of game without endangering the life and limb of the game", in addition, a legal trapping method may be used for capture. [Art. 60 para 1-2 of the Vtv. vhr.] Although it requires an individual permit, the legislation still allows for the possibility of removal from inhabited areas. Let us quickly add that the capture of game in the interior, while being a more humane method than trapping, is often much more problematic and requires much more preparation (both tactically and in terms of time). Furthermore, there is no guarantee that a wild animal, for example, can be lured into a cage in an urban environment with food, as it will find plenty of food elsewhere. Vtv. vhr. also draws attention to the fact that the trap must be checked at least every twenty-four hours and the captured game must be removed from the trap as soon as possible after detection, and if it is unable to move, its veterinary care must be provided immediately. [Art. 22 para 4-5 of the Vtv. vhr.] Although it is not the main thrust of our research, it is interesting to point out the difference in the terminology used in the Vtv. and Vtv. vhr. While the Vtv. uses the term "stun gun", the Vtv. vhr. uses the definition of stunning and paralysing chemicals and ammunition.

In the description of the current legal environment, we have so far tried to collect the substantive rules and to present the ex lex situation. In the following, we will try to present guarantees and legal institutions among the procedural rules, which support the research problem under consideration from a procedural law point of view. Since we are talking about an as yet unregulated legal environment, we will attempt to outline a procedural model, supplemented by legal instruments already known from the Åkr., which may be of assistance to law enforcers in a similar situation.

# 3. Procedural issues relating to the presence of wild animals in inhabited areas - de lege ferenda

In this chapter, we focus - in addition to what has been outlined earlier - on how this currently procedurally unregulated environment could be remedied. Given that this is an increasingly common situation - which is likely to become more common in the future - the legislator must be prepared to deal with this problem. We therefore conclude our study with a procedural solution to fill this gap. We would like to emphasise in advance that we are focusing on legal instruments that can serve as a solution to remedy the situation.

In the case outlined above, the possibility of immediate intervention is not resolved, since by the time the client's request is processed in a full procedure, the situation is either resolved or becomes more serious, thereby endangering the physical safety of the residents. When dealing with procedural law in the context of the above topic, we believe that it is worthwhile to focus on key aspects. A key point is, above all, speed.

In the exercise of its powers, the authority shall act within the time limits laid down by law within a reasonable time. [Art. 2 para 2 point c) of the Ákr.] One element of the principle of legality is the requirement of reasonableness (Czibrik, 2022, p. 88) - which, as an indeterminate legal concept, makes the daily life of legal practitioners rather difficult. What else fits into this category? Before the entry into force of the Ákr., this concept was identified with the 21-day time limit for the administrative procedure, but legal developments have shown that we can go below this time limit. The reasonableness of the time limit shall be determined by taking into account the particular circumstances of each case, in particular, for example, the complexity of the case. [Case T-66/01 - Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd v European Commission point 4] In our view, however, the above problem must also be contrasted with "reasonableness", since in such a situation - in the event of a wildlife sighting in a populated area - the legislator must provide lawmakers with precise, traceable and rapid actionable legal solutions. And the current regulation - in our view - does not comply with this.

The Ákr. makes a distinction between three types of procedure with regard to the time limits for the administration of cases: an automatic decision is made in 24 hours, a summary decision in 8 days and a full decision in 60 days. A longer time limit may be set by law or a shorter time limit may be set by statute. [Art. 50 para 3 of the Ákr.] However, in the context of our topic, it is not advisable to concentrate on a summary and complete procedure, since the time factor is of paramount importance when animals, huntable or not, are present in a populated area.

In the past we have already discussed the case when a huntable animal appears in a residential area and causes damage, but now we would like to focus on the case when no damage is caused, but the animal appears in the inland area. The procedure outlined above is relatively lengthy, which raises the question of whether, taking into account the speed factor, could the authority act under an automatic decision-making procedure? Under the current legal circumstances, clearly not, since it is a precondition that either the conditions for an automatic decision-making procedure under the Act No. CCXXII of 2015 on general rules for electronic administration and trust services are met and there is no opposing party, or the law or government decree allows for the application, all data are available to the authority at the time of submission, the decision does not require discretion and there is no opposing party. [Art. 40 of the Ákr] In the light of the sectoral legislation, currently there is no legal or governmental authorisation to conduct this procedure. However, there is an urgent need to implement such a situation into a legislative environment. Since ignoring the time factor could potentially jeopardise the protection of persons and property or lead to damage, i.e. the above situations require rapid intervention. An

automatic decision-making procedure could create the possibility to speed up the process. Thus, our first de lege ferenda proposal would be that the legislator should create the possibility of an automatic decision-making procedure in such a situation, so that the case could be immediately dealt with by the authority. However, it is questionable who the legislator should entrust with this power. In response, we would suggest professional hunters. The legal requirements placed on him or her provide a proper basis for determining the most effective means of dealing with a wildlife sighting. The Article 50 paragraph 2 of the Vtv. says "A professional hunter may be a natural person who holds at least a secondary vocational qualification, a hunting firearms licence, a service certificate and service badge issued by the police, membership of a hunting chamber and who is registered as a professional hunter by the National Hungarian Hunting Chamber." Since the Vtv. specifies that the hunting area of a hunting licence holder must employ at least one professional hunter [Art. 50 para 3 of the Vtv.], who performs his activity on a full-time basis. [Art. 50 para 4 of the Vtv.] Paragraph 53 of the Vtv. details the main duties of a professional hunter. In our view, this substantive legal provision should be further extended and given "powers" to act in the event of a sighting of wildlife in an inland area. However, the question may also arise as to which body should exercise supervisory powers over it. In our opinion, two bodies could be considered by analogy: the territorial competent hunting authority on the one hand and the territorial body of the law enforcement body on the other. However, due to space limitations, we will not discuss this in detail here.

The official measures, which result in an administrative relation, apply to a wide range of specialised administrative areas. [Detailed Explanatory Memorandum to Art. 106-110 of the Akr.] Their aim is to override the standard procedural rules so that the public interest is not jeopardised by the possibility of time being lost, which is a natural consequence of a procedure under the general rules. Therefore, in addition to emphasising the importance of the time factor, taking into account the legal provisions of the Akr., when analysing the current regulatory framework, it is necessary to examine the possibility of ordering temporary protective measures and, in this context, the possibility of proceedings outside the territorial jurisdiction, as these legal provisions could also help law enforcement authorities to act as soon as possible. It should be noted here, however, that since it is questionable which body is competent to act in such a matter, the possibility of acting outside the jurisdiction may raise further problems. By overriding the principle of legality, situations and circumstances may arise - such as the appearance of game in a populated area - where the public administration has to act with exceptional procedural means to protect the public interest, the common good or public safety. Such an atypical procedural act may be a temporary measure, in which the authority acts in the absence of competence with the aim of preventing damage, danger or harm, (Fábián et al., 2017, p. 11) if the authority competent to act is unable to do so or if action by another authority leads to more effective and faster action. In accordance with the provisions of the Ákr., in the case of temporary measures, the authority - regardless of its competence and jurisdiction - is obliged to take the temporary measures ex officio, in the absence of which the delay would result in unforeseeable damage, danger or unforeseeable violation of personal rights, [Art. 106 para 1 of the Akr.] The provisional measure is decided by the authority in the form of an administrative order, but the practice is that it is only after the immediate intervention has actually taken place that it is actually drafted. In the order, the authority has to justify the following facts: that there is a threat of harm, danger or personal injury as defined in the Akr., therefore an intervention is necessary and the intervention is proportionate and cannot be avoided otherwise. (Baranyi, 2018, p. 654)

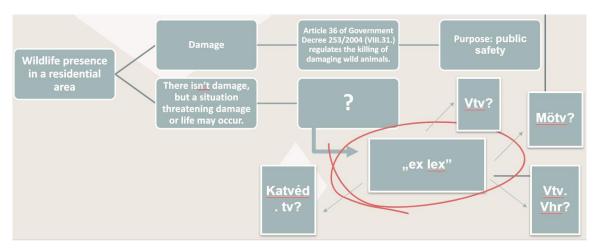
In relation to the existing legal instruments, we sought to emphasise that one of the central concepts of administrative procedural law is urgency. (Baranyi, 2018, p. 653) Thus, last but not least, in the context of procedural issues, we also address the issue of immediate enforceability, since public

authority measures are essentially aimed at immediate enforcement, and therefore we cannot ignore this issue. The authority may declare the decision immediately enforceable, inter alia, to prevent, avert or mitigate the harmful consequences of a situation arising from a reason for imposing a protection order, which threatens life, serious harm or significant violation of personality rights. [Art. 84 point a) of the Ákr.] Technically, the order for immediate enforcement should be made in the operative provision of the decision, and the reasons for it should be set out in the statement of reasons. In these cases, speed is of essence because a delay in enforcement may create a situation that threatens a public interest protected by law or the life, physical integrity or property of others, and it is therefore an essential task of the authorities to resolve the conflict between the right of the client to a remedy and the public interest protected by law. (Hoffmann, 2018, p. 558) It should also be stressed that the decision on the declaration of immediate enforceability must state the extent to which it serves the public interest. [Hungarian Supreme Court Kpkf.VI.37.948/2000.]

#### 4. Concluding thoughts

In our study we wanted to highlight a current problem. We believe, and the circumstances show, that over time the conflict outlined above will lead to increasingly serious consequences, and that this ex lex situation should be remedied as soon as possible. In our research we attempted to remedy this problem, drawing the attention of the legislator to the fact that delaying the regulation may cause significant problems later on, even claiming human lives. The lack of regulation makes dealing with emergency situations complicated and difficult, but in these situations the exact opposite would be needed: speed and operational procedures. It is hoped that in the further stages of the research we will be able to formulate more precise and exact legal provisions, which, if brought to the attention of the legislator, could solve a legal problem.

To summarise our study, here is a flowchart summarising the existing legislation and our main dilemmas.



Flowchart 1. Legislation and main dilemmas.

Flowchart 1 shows that in the case of damage caused by a wild animal in an inland area, the legal basis for a lawful procedure is provided. However, if the wild animal actually only appears on an inland area and does not cause any damage, we are currently faced with an "ex lex" situation. In our study, we

have attempted to delimit the treatment of the identified problem through several pieces of legislation (Katdvéd. tv.; Vtv.; Vtv. vhr.; Mötv. and other sectoral regulations) and to make a duly substantiated proposal, which, in our opinion, could provide a reassuring solution to the current situation of wildlife occurrence in the inland areas. However, it was not enough to only explore the substantive laws focusing on the area, but in our opinion it was also necessary to describe in more detail the procedural rules (Ákr.), which are the relevant legal institutions for dealing with the problematic situation.

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